

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

Method for the operation of a power plant.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTIONField of the Invention

10 The invention is based on a method for the operation of a power plant in accordance with the preamble of the independent claim.

Discussion of Background

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Power plant installations which burn carbon-containing fuels as compressed atmospheric air is supplied are generally known. However, the combustion gases produced during the combustion, such as carbon dioxide (CO₂) and
20 nitrogen oxides, present a multilayered problem and, not least, are implicated in global warming.

EP 0 953 748 A1 has disclosed a power plant with a closed or quasi-closed cycle. The cycle is operated
25 with a CO₂-containing medium with internal combustion of a fuel and the oxygen required for this purpose. Excess CO₂ is removed from the cycle and introduced into a condensation installation, and the condensed CO₂ can then be disposed of in an environmentally friendly
30 way. The use of a closed or quasi-closed cycle with the addition of pure oxygen moreover prevents atmospheric nitrogen from entering the flame, and consequently no nitrogen oxides, or at most only low levels of nitrogen oxides, are formed.

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However, the design of the cycle means that inert gases which are entrained with the fuel or oxygen accumulate in the process to well above the starting concentration

and, as a result of a shift in the thermodynamic properties of the working medium, may have a considerable adverse effect on the process efficiency. The composition of the fuel used cannot be influenced
5 by the process described, but the oxygen fed to the process should be as pure as possible, in order to minimize the levels of inert gases.

Hitherto, it has only been possible to produce
10 high-purity oxygen in the quantities required by cryogenic means. In this context, the high costs of the air fractionation installation, which places a question mark over economic operation of power plants with a closed or quasi-closed cycle, are mainly caused by the
15 low concentration of oxygen in the ambient air and the resulting large mass and volumetric flows which are required in the air fractionation installation.

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Accordingly, one object of the invention is to provide a novel method for the operation of a power plant of the type described in the introduction in which
25 high-purity oxygen is made available at low cost.

According to the invention, this is achieved by the features of the independent claim.

30 Therefore, the core idea of the invention is for means for coarse fractionation of the supplied air to be connected upstream of the air fractionation installation.

35 The advantages of the invention consist, inter alia, in the fact that after it has left the coarse fractionation installation, the oxygen-enriched air, of which there is consequently a reduced mass flow, is

passed into the air fractionation installation, where it is processed. The upstream coarse fractionation installation means that the conventional air fractionation installation can be made very much smaller and less expensive.

It has proven advantageous for the coarse fractionation installation to be operated using a membrane process or an adsorption process, for example a vacuum swing adsorption process. In the former case, the permeated air constituent may be either oxygen or nitrogen, depending on the type of membrane.

Further advantageous configurations of the invention will emerge from the subclaims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

A more complete appreciation of the invention and many of the attendant advantages thereof will be readily obtained as the same becomes better understood by reference to the following detailed description when considered in connection with accompanying drawing, wherein features which are not essential to gaining a direct understanding of the invention have been omitted, the direction of flow of the media is indicated by arrows, and wherein:

Fig. 1 shows a circuit of gas turbine process with a closed cycle.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring now to the drawings, wherein like reference numerals designate identical or corresponding parts, fig. 1, which is the only figure, shows a gas turbine

with a closed or at least quasi-closed, i.e. largely closed, cycle. This gas turbine or gas turbine assembly comprises, in terms of its equipment, a compressor unit 1, a generator 19 which is coupled to this compressor 1, a turbine 3 which is coupled to the compressor 1, and a combustion chamber 2 which acts between the compressor 1 and turbine 3. The turbomachines 1 and 3 can be coupled by means of a common shaft 20. The compressor may also be equipped with an intercooler (not shown) or with means for isothermal cooling.

The cycle also comprises a cooler and/or waste heat utilizer 4, a water separator 5 and a CO₂ removal location 6. The CO₂ which is removed via the CO₂ removal location 6 can, for example, be condensed by means of a condensation installation (not shown) and then disposed of in an environmentally friendly way. A cycle medium 21, for the most part comprising CO₂ and optionally H₂O, is compressed in the compressor 1 and fed to the combustion chamber 2.

Furthermore, a fuel mass flow 7, in this case, for example, natural gas or methane CH₄, and an oxygen stream 12 are fed to the combustion chamber 2, where they are burnt. The hot gas 22 which is formed in the process and in this case substantially comprises the components CO₂ and H₂O, as well as any inert gases which may have been supplied with the oxygen or the fuel, is fed to the turbine 3, where it is expanded so as to perform work. The turbine outlet stream is fed to the cooler and/or waste heat utilizer 4 via a line 16, where it is cooled. The water which precipitates as a result of the cooling is separated out via the water separator 5. The remaining cycle medium 21, mostly made up of CO₂, is then fed back to the compressor 1. Since the components CO₂ and H₂O which are formed as a result of the combustion are removed continuously, a cycle with a substantially constant composition of the working medium is formed.

The cycle medium can also be liquefied by dissipation of heat, in which case a pump can be used instead of the compressor.

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By way of example, a cryogenic air fractionation installation 11 is used to produce the oxygen stream 12. The cryogenic separation of mixtures, such as air, in order to obtain oxygen (O_2) and nitrogen (N_2), is known. In this context, reference may be made, for example, to the Linde two-column process. However, air fractionation installations entail high costs, which are dependent primarily on the mass or volumetric flows which are to pass through them. Therefore, according to the invention a coarse fractionation installation 9, which operates according to a simple membrane principle, of single-stage or multistage design and in which, by way of example, polymer membranes may be used, is connected upstream of the cryogenic air fractionation installation 11. In the coarse fractionation installation, the air 8 which is drawn in is enriched with oxygen by nitrogen being separated out. Depending on the type of membrane, the permeated air constituent may be either oxygen or nitrogen. Any required temperature control for the membrane module can be achieved by thermal integration with the waste heat utilizer 4 or the cryogenic air fractionation installation 11. On leaving the coarse fractionation installation, the mass flow of air 10, which has been enriched to oxygen levels of at least 40 vol% and has therefore been reduced in magnitude by at least 50%, is passed into the cryogenic air fractionation installation, which can consequently be made very much smaller and less expensive than if the upstream coarse fractionation installation 9 were not present.

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Of course, the invention is not restricted to the exemplary embodiment which has been shown and described.

5 Obviously, numerous modifications and variations of the present invention are possible in light of the above teachings. It is therefore to be understood that within the scope of the appended claims, the invention may be practiced otherwise than as specifically described
10 herein.

LIST OF DESIGNATIONS

1	Compressor
2	Combustion chamber
3	Turbine
4	Cooler and/or waste heat utilizer
5	Water separator
6	CO ₂ removal location
7	Fuel mass flow
8	Air supply
9	Coarse fractionation installation
10	Reduced mass flow of air
11	Cryogenic air fractionation installation
12	Oxygen stream
16	Line
19	Generator
20	Common shaft
21	Cycle medium
22	Hot gas